AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS ACHIEVE WITH VOUCHERS PAGE 5

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN TEASLEY PAGES 14-15

School Reform News

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California Teacher Union Attacks Citizen Control of Schools

photo/Anacleto Rapping

"I can't imagine a more disastrous step for California to take than to pass this bill."
ROY ROMER
SUPERINTENDENT
LOS ANGELES UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent Roy Romer and a kindergartner discuss a computer program that experts say helps students learn to read. Romer strongly opposes a teacher union proposal pending in the California legislature.

BY MIKE ANTONUCCI

The California Teachers Association (CTA) was sitting pretty just a few months ago.

- Last year, it achieved a statewide double-digit pay raise.
- This year, it achieved a cost-of-living increase despite a major budget deficit and cuts in other state services.
- It engineered a mandatory agency fee law.
- Its endorsed candidates hold the office of governor and state superintendent of public instruction.
- It has an overwhelming majority in both houses of the legislature and a disjointed, demoralized, and ineffective opposition party.
- And it has left-of-center slants in the editorial offices of all of the state's major daily newspapers.

Nevertheless, CTA officials managed to accomplish something few observers believed could be done: They united school administrators, school boards, newspapers, Republicans, and more than a few Democrats—including Governor Gray Davis and the Democratic Leadership Council—in denouncing AB 2160, a CTA-sponsored bill that would expand the scope of collective bargaining

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WI Democrats Vote Again to Slash Vouchers

BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

In the Spring of 2001, Democrats in the Wisconsin State Senate voted to slash funding for the Milwaukee voucher program by half and to limit participation to students already enrolled in it.

This year, they did themselves one better, voting to cut the program's funding for next year to less than half its current funding ... and to less than one-fifth the following year.

The Democrat-controlled Senate eliminated from the state budget the $23 million in state aid that permits more than 10,000 low-income city children to attend private schools through the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. The Republican-controlled Assembly had approved a budget without cuts to the choice program. The two budget bills must now be reconciled.

"I'm disappointed that [Senate Democrats] continue to attack the children of Milwaukee," Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen (R-Brookfield) told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. "We had to rescue them from the Democrats' attacks in the last budget, and I guess we'll have to do it again."

Voucher Proponent Named to Board

The Senate vote came on April 5, just three days after Milwaukee voters overwhelmingly backed the election of a strong supporter of the voucher program to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) Board of Directors.

Barbara Horton, a former acting superintendent of MPS, won a decisive 58 percent of the vote

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Education Next in Line for Deregulation

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

Would quality rise, or fall, if K-12 education were deregulated and opened to choice and competition? The question is at the forefront of the school choice debate.

Similar concerns about the effects of choice and competition occupied the attention of policymakers before monopolies were ended in other critical American industries, such as surface freight transportation, long-distance telecommunications, and the airlines.

After reviewing what's happened with those industries and the early results from school choice, two Federal Trade Commission economists have concluded K-12 education reacts in much the same way as other key public services when confronted with competition: Performance improves and quality rises, for those who choose alternative schools and for those who remain in the public schools.

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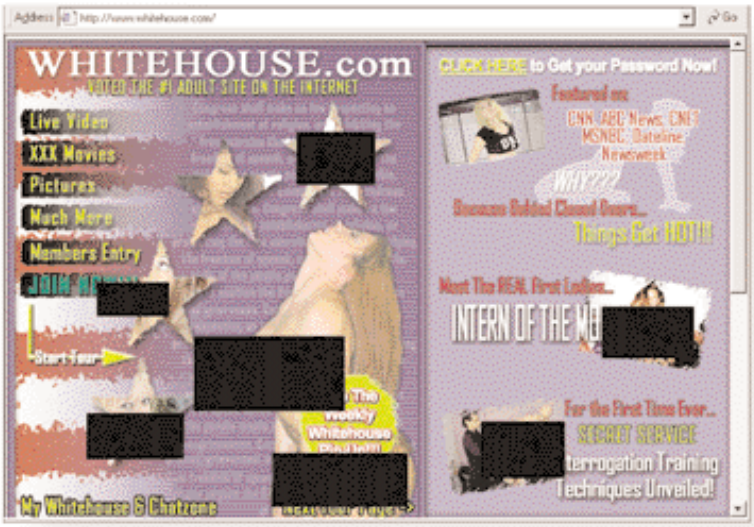

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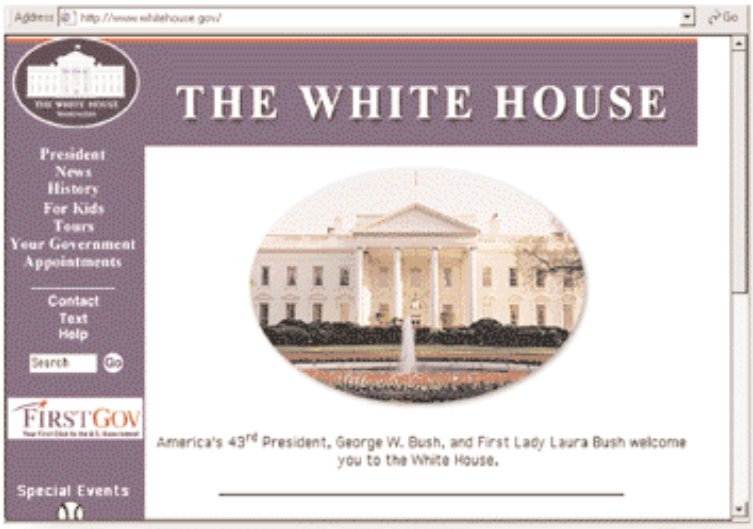

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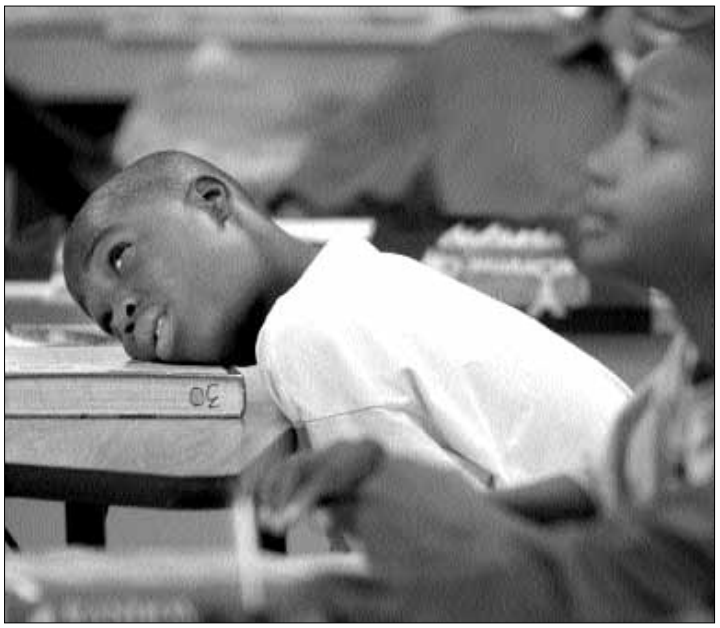

Antionne Alexander, 14, rests his head on a book during class at the Transition Learning Center in San Pablo, California.
Photo: Larry Strong

Extensive Special-Education Hearings Begin

On April 18, the House Subcommittee on Education Reform held its first hearing pertaining to the scheduled 2002 reauthorization of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The hearing examined the topic, "Special Education Finance at the Federal, State and Local Level."

Chaired by Representative Michael Castle (R-Delaware), the session included witnesses who addressed how federal dollars are currently distributed to state and local districts. This was to be the first of several hearings on special-education reform.

Castle set the stage for reform earlier this year, when he told an audience of state legislators, "We need to focus on achievement—not just compliance. While parents can receive a due process hearing if their child does not receive services, they have little recourse if he or she isn't meeting his or her education goals."

The Senate Education Committee's first IDEA hearing was April 25.

Meanwhile, the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education continued to hold field hearings in cities around the country to examine different aspects of special education. The Commission met in Houston in late February to discuss a range of reform issues, and also visited Houston public schools.

On April 16, the Commission met in New York City to address minority over-identification and misidentification in special-education programs. Also discussed was the rising number of children classified as disabled as a result of being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The Commission noted the number of such students has increased more than 300 percent over the past few years alone. (See "Almost 1 in 8 Students Labeled 'Disabled,'" *School Reform News*, March 2002.)

Reynolds a Recess Appointment

In a surprise announcement on March 29, President George W. Bush announced five new appointments, including naming Gerald Reynolds as Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights. The "recess appointments" were timed while Congress was out of session, a procedure allowing the nominees to circumvent the usual Senate confirmation process.

In Reynolds' case, a hearing had been held before the Senate Education Committee on February 26, some six months after the President had initially named Reynolds for the post, but it remained unclear when Chairman Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) would schedule a vote.

At a February hearing, Kennedy repeatedly raised questions over Reynolds' qualifications for the post. The nominee had provoked controversy within the civil rights community, largely because he was perceived as an opponent of racial preferences in such areas as college admissions and government contracting. Reynolds had most recently served as regulatory counsel for Kansas City Power and Light; he also held prior positions with the Center for New Black Leadership and the Center for Equal Opportunity.

Hearing Urges Tax Credits

At an April 17 hearing of the House Education Committee, panelists urged Congress to pursue education tax credits aimed at helping low-income families.

A school choice highlight of President Bush's FY 2003 budget is a new refundable tax credit for parents transferring a child out of a failing public school. Parents would receive a credit against their federal taxes of up to 50 percent of the first $5,000 in tuition, fees, and transportation costs incurred to transfer their child to a private school.

"Education tax credits open new avenues of support for all of our schools—both public and private," Representative Pete Hoekstra (R-Michigan) told the panel. Witnesses testifying in favor of the proposal included Lawrence Reed, president of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, and Lisa Graham Keegan, former Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction.

"No Child Left Behind" Goes on Tour

Education Secretary Rod Paige took to the road April 8, commencing a scheduled 25-city tour to promote the No Child Left Behind Act. At a downtown rally at his first stop in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Paige reiterated the administration's commitment to ensure that all children will be able to read by the time they finish the third grade.

"It means that every American must take a stand to get involved for and change the culture and expectations we have for every school," Paige told his audience.

While state policymakers develop their strategies to implement the new law, the Department of Education announced in early April that for the first time, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have achieved compliance with the assessment requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994. Only 22 states had met this requirement or had a formal plan for achieving it when Paige took office.

On the eve of the April 8 deadline for compliance, 18 states had received full approval for their assessment systems, another 29 had only a formal plan and timeline, and five were operating under compliance agreements.

"Eight years after enactment, that's a miserable record that bodes ill for the implementation of 'No Child Left Behind,'" observed Thomas B. Fordham Foundation President Chester E. Finn Jr. An April 2002 report from the General Accounting Office also warned "the majority of states may not be well-positioned to meet the requirements added in 2001."

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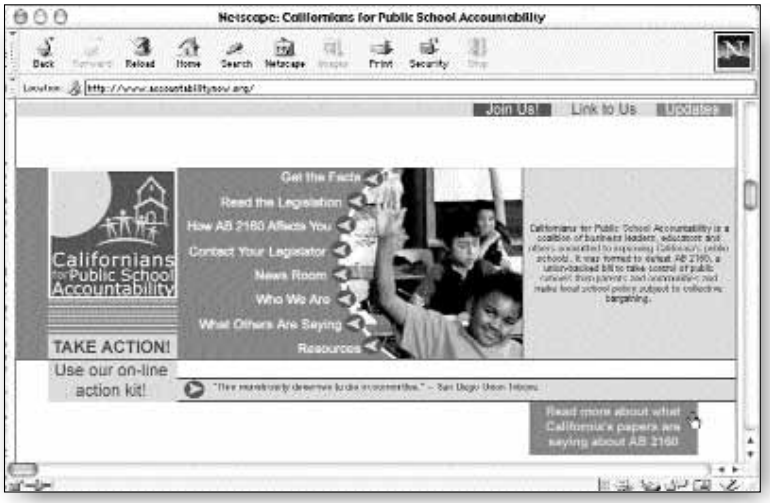

A coalition of taxpayer, business, school administration, and school superintendent groups, called Californians for Public School Accountability, established a Web site (http://www.AccountabilityNow.org) to battle the CTA legislation. There have been ad hoc coalitions formed in the past to fight legislation—to unionize charter schools, for example—but this is the first time a formal organization has been built in California to defeat a single bill.

CALIFORNIA continued from page 1

in the state to include every decision made at the district level.

The bill is being carried by new Assembly Speaker Herb Wesson, along with former teacher union activists Jackie Goldberg and Virginia Strom-Martin.

"Greatest Gift to Ignorance"

The Education Intelligence Agency first warned of CTA's plans in July 2001, and spelled them out in detail in November. But only now, after the bill has been published and introduced in the legislature, are Californians realizing what Frankenstein's monster has in mind.

San Francisco Chronicle columnist Debra J. Saunders called the bill "the greatest gift to ignorance the too-generous state of California has ever given." The *San Diego Union-Tribune* editorialized the bill was "a turbocharged monstrosity" and "one of the most pernicious education proposals ever concocted by the California Teachers Association." The *Los Angeles Times* called it a "power grab" and even called the worthiness of traditional bargaining of salaries and benefits "debatable."

But the state capital's newspaper, the *Sacramento Bee*, has led the way. One columnist, Daniel Weintraub, called the bill "outrageous" and said it reflected "the arrogance of a union that believes experts know all and that parents and the community are best seen and not heard."

Another *Bee* columnist, Peter Schrag, called this "most dangerous" bill a "putsch" by CTA President Wayne Johnson. And the newspaper's editors wrote the bill "would wreck public education in California," calling it "an all-out frontal attack on citizen control of the public schools." Deeming the battle over AB 2160 "the defining education issue of the year," the *Bee* labeled those who support it "enemies of public education."

The *Long Beach Press Telegram* and the *Stockton Record* joined the long parade of newspapers opposed to the bill. Such unanimity is rare enough in California ... but absolutely unique is the number of newspapers running second and third editorials in opposition to the bill, which has attracted national attention. The *Wall Street Journal* called it "a grubby union power play masquerading as concern for academics."

"A Genuinely Bad Idea"

But perhaps the biggest blow came from the Democratic Leadership Council. In an article published in the March 25 *New Dem Daily*, the DLC called AB 2160 "a genuinely bad idea that could lead to the disenfranchisement of elected officials, parents, and taxpayers in key decisions on public education policy." This "subordination of the public interest to the interests of union negotiators" is something, the article says, that "is also certain to reflect poorly upon teachers' unions generally."

School administrators were no less vehement. "I can't imagine a more disastrous step for California to take than to pass this bill," Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent Roy Romer told the *Los Angeles Times*.

"I've been in this business for 36 years and it's the most dangerous piece of legislation I've ever seen," said Sacramento Unified School District Superintendent Jim Sweeney.

The *Bee's* Schrag reported the governor's office as "frothing," and *Bee* editors wrote that Davis's education advisors initially were "quietly soliciting opposition to the bill." But on April 10, the Democratic governor—who won election in 1998 with the help of the union—announced his opposition to the bill, saying he didn't want "textbooks to be held hostage to issues involving wages."

Devil's in the Details

So what's in AB 2160? The state's newspapers have hit upon the key issue: *Everything* that takes place in a school and school district would be subject to agreement by the union in contract negotiations.

But even the newspapers have failed to spell out what it would mean. Here are just a few of the explicit areas that would be bargained:

- the utilization and assignment of mentors;
- the selection of school assistance and intervention teams;
- the development and implementation of any program designed to enhance pupil academic performance;
- the development and implementation of the content and delivery of professional training and development;
- the selection of textbooks and instructional materials;
- the development and implementation of local educational standards;
- the development and implementation of the definition of educational objectives, content of courses, and curriculum;
- the participation of employees on school site councils or any other advisory or representative body;
- the development and implementation of any program to encourage parental involvement in student education;
- the maintenance of school facilities; and
- other professional issues.

Even conservative interest groups have been slow to realize the implications of the bill. The widened scope of bargaining would also apply to charter schools with union representation. Getting rid of whole language or fuzzy math programs would require bargaining with the union. Instituting a new parental involvement program would require bargaining with the union. Even installing new lighting on campus would require bargaining with the union.

While religious conservatives are up in arms about the NEA Task Force on Sexual Orientation and resolutions that have little practical impact, the California Teachers Association is pushing for a system that would allow any local teacher union affiliate in the state to bargain, develop, and implement gay/lesbian curricula ... or labor history ... or Mumia Abu Jamal Day ... or MathLand ... or any other misguided nonsense, and do it all behind closed doors.

In April, a coalition of taxpayer, business, school administration, and school superintendent groups, called Californians for Public School Accountability, established a Web site (http://www.AccountabilityNow.org) to battle the CTA legislation. There have been ad hoc coalitions formed in the past to fight legislation—to unionize charter schools, for example—but this is the first time a formal organization has been built in California to defeat a single bill.

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Vouchers Hike Black Student Test Scores

Prolonged field trial finds impressive gains for school choice

BY KIRK A. JOHNSON AND KRISTA KAFER

Compared to their counterparts who remained in public schools, low-income African-American students achieved impressive test score gains when they used privately funded school vouchers from the School Choice Scholarships Foundation (SCSF) to attend private schools in New York City, according to researchers from Harvard University, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR), and the University of Wisconsin.

Parental satisfaction also was higher among parents of students who attended a school of choice.

Specifically:

- Standardized reading and math test scores for African-American students who had used the vouchers to attend private schools for three years were 9.2 percentile points higher than those of comparable African-American students who did not attend a private school.
- Overall test scores for African-American voucher recipients who attended a private school for at least one of the three years were, on average, 7.6 percentile points higher than those of African-American students who had never attended a private school.
- When asked to assign a grade to their children's school, 42 percent of voucher parents gave their school an "A," while only 10 percent of parents of the control group public school students did so.

These findings add to a growing body of research on the effects of school choice on student achievement. Since the SCSF was founded six years ago as a philanthropic, privately funded voucher program, similar funds have offered voucher-like scholarships to students in Washington, DC and Dayton, Ohio. The initial studies of these programs show promising results as well, as does research on students using a publicly funded voucher program in Cleveland, Ohio.

Background

The SCSF began collecting money in 1996 to fund scholarships that would allow students in New York City public schools to attend a private or parochial school of choice. Since 1997, 1,300 vouchers have been awarded to the children of low-income families; those vouchers, which have a maximum value of $1,400 annually, are redeemable for at least three years. To be eligible for the vouchers, the student:

> **"[L]ow-income African-American students achieved impressive test score gains when they used privately funded school vouchers ... to attend private schools in New York City ..."**

- must be entering the first through fifth grades;
- must be attending a New York City public school; and
- must qualify for the federal school lunch program (that is, must be from a low-income family).

Between February and April 1997 alone, SCSF received 20,000 applications for the vouchers. Applicants took a baseline achievement test—the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)—in reading and math. About 70 percent of them scored below the citywide median score on the ITBS. SCSF decided 85 percent of the vouchers awarded would go to below-average students.

The basic design of the study, conducted by Mathematica, gave the researchers a unique opportunity to assess the effectiveness of a working voucher program. A randomized lottery, conducted in May 1997, effectively assigned the students into two groups: the "experiment/treatment" group who received the vouchers, and the "control group" who did not. That design is very similar to the way researchers in the medical community assess the effectiveness of new procedures or new drugs; it is generally considered to be the "gold standard" of research protocols.

What the Research Showed

The experiment/treatment group chosen by the lottery was comprised of 1,000 families in New York City; the control group had 960 families. By virtue of the random nature of the lottery, the families in each group are not statistically different in terms of family background, income, or student achievement.

In Spring 2000, both the experiment and control groups were invited back to complete third-year follow-up questionnaires and tests. ITBS scores are reported using National Percentile Rankings (NPR) instead of raw scores. The percentile rankings show how well students perform in a particular subject relative to everyone else in the country who took the test that year. If a student received an NPR of 50 on the ITBS reading exam, for example, he or she had scored higher than 50 percent of all students taking that test.

The 2000 ITBS test scores showed the vouchers had significant effects, which were most pronounced for African-American students.

African-American students who used the voucher to go to a school of choice for three years had a composite NPR of 26.83 on their follow-up tests, compared with a control group of African-American students who had an NPR composite score of 17.60—a 9.23 percentile point difference.

The scores of African-American voucher students who had attended a school of choice for at least one year were significantly higher than those of the control group. These "part-time" voucher students had a composite NPR of 25.37, compared with a composite score of 17.82 for the control group—a difference of 7.55 percentile points.

The results are even more pronounced for math achievement. African-American voucher students who stayed in a school of choice for three years scored a full 11.80 percentile points higher on the math test than did the control group. Voucher students who had attended a private or parochial school for at least one year scored 9.65 percentile points higher in math.

The differences are somewhat lower, but still statistically significant, for reading achievement. Three-year voucher students scored 6.66 percentile points higher than did the control group, and students who had used the voucher for one or two years scored 5.45 percentile points higher.

Kirk A. Johnson, Ph.D., is a senior policy analyst in the Center for Data Analysis, and Krista Kafer is senior policy analyst for education, at The Heritage Foundation.

For more information...

WWW The February 19, 2000, research report—"School Choice in New York City After Three Years: An Evaluation of the School Choice Scholarships Program," by Daniel P. Mayer, Paul E. Peterson, David E. Myers, Christina Clark Tuttle, and William G. Howell—is available as *Paper 02-01* from the Web site of Harvard University's Program on Education Policy and Governance at **www.ksg.harvard.edu/pepg/papers.htm.**

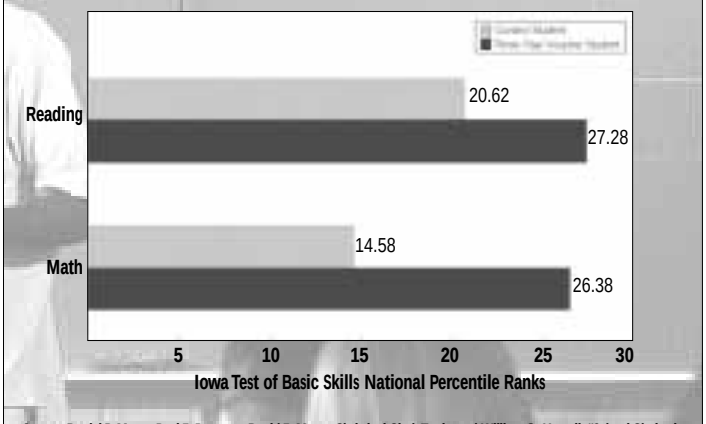
An unabridged version of the April 12, 2002, Heritage Foundation Report—"What the Harvard/Mathematica Study Says About Vouchers and Low-Income African-American Students," by Kirk A. Johnson and Krista Kafer—is available as *Publication 02-03* from the Foundation's Web site at **www.heritage.org/library/cda/cda02-03.html.**

Black Voucher Students Have Higher Achievement Than Black Control Students

	RAW SCORES			PERCENTILE DIFFERENCES		
	Composite	Math	Reading	Composite	Math	Reading
Three-Year Voucher Student	26.83	26.38	27.28	9.23	11.80	6.66
Control Student	17.60	14.58	20.62			
At Least One-Year Voucher Student	25.37	25.45	25.30	7.55	9.65	5.45
Control Student	17.82	15.79	19.85			

Note:
These are National Percentile Rankings (NPR) instead of raw scores or students taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills

Black Voucher Students Have Higher Achievement in Reading and Much Higher Achievement in Math



Source: Daniel P. Mayer, Paul E. Peterson, David E. Myers, Christinal Clark Tuttle, and William G. Howell, "School Choice in New York City After Three Years: An Evaluation of the School Choice Scholarships Program Final Report." Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., Report No. B404-045, February 19, 2002.

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COMPETITION continued from page 1

Since the early school choice results are consistent with the hypothesis that competition improves quality, then "it is quite likely that education could be competition's next big 'success story,'" suggest Jerry Ellig, a fellow at the Mercatus Center of George Mason University, and Kenneth Kelly.

Ellig and Kelly's study, published in the Spring 2002 issue of *Texas Review of Law & Politics*, takes note of competing claims in the school choice debate. One side says choice will elevate the quality of education as a result of competition, while the other contends choice will destroy public education as money and motivated students leave the system.

"In economists' language," the authors write, "the school choice debate asks whether opening up a monopoly or cartel to competition can be expected to increase or decrease quality."

Reviewing the Record

During the past two decades, similar debates raged over deregulating public service monopolies. Proponents contended competition would increase quality as the former cartels and monopolies struggled to keep their customers. Opponents warned of dire reductions in quality as companies were forced to cut costs, and some even raised the same spectre of "cream-skimming" so often voiced by school choice foes. They warned competition would lower quality for those who remained with the former monopolist as new enterprises "skimmed the cream"—that is, took away the most profitable customers.

Ellig and Kelly review the record, concluding the experience of deregulated industries clearly indicates competition "tends to increase quality for virtually all customers, including customers who choose to remain with the incumbent suppliers."

In support of that conclusion, they note:

- With long-distance telecommunications, competition pressured AT&T "to deploy fiber optic cable and digital switches, both of which significantly increased call clarity and quality."
- Deregulation brought about improvement in truck service that was worth $2.4 billion a year to shippers, and gains in rail-service time worth $13.7 billion annually to shippers.
- While some aspects of airline service deteriorated under deregulation, other measures of quality improved. Weighing quality improvements against reductions, the economists found a net improvement for passengers of about $11.5 billion annually.

As for "cream-skimming," there was none in interstate trucking because there were no unprofitable customers. In the case of airlines and telecommunications, policymakers simply subsidized the unprofitable customers "at a fraction of the cost created by the old regulatory system."

Similar Pattern for Education

Ellig and Kelly next review studies of public voucher and private scholarship programs to determine if education follows the same pattern—i.e., academic quality rising for students who choose to leave traditional public schools as well as for those who choose to stay. They found the data "largely confirm" that expectation. Specifically:

- Three different university-based research teams found Milwaukee's voucher program, which has been in effect more than 10 years, "either improved or had no effect" on pupils' academic performance. None found vouchers had reduced the academic achievement of voucher students.
- A study by Harvard University economist Caroline Minter Hoxby established that over a three-year period fourth-graders' test scores increased more than twice as much in Milwaukee public schools that faced significant competition as in the schools that faced no competition.
- With the Cleveland voucher program—the subject of a pending U.S. Supreme Court decision that could be a landmark in the choice movement—Indiana University researchers found vouchers had little or no impact on academic performance, while Harvard University researchers found voucher students showed significant improvement.
- In Florida, the public schools that have showed the greatest year-to-year improvement have been those facing competition from a new state program that offers vouchers to students stuck in chronically failing public schools.
- An evaluation of a program of privately financed vouchers in Washington, New York City, and Dayton, Ohio found that African-American students who received vouchers scored 6.3 percentile points higher on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills than their peers who applied for but did not receive vouchers. The largest gains were in Washington, DC, where 93 percent of voucher students were African-Americans. Those students' test scores were 8 percentile points higher in reading and 10 percentile points higher in math than the scores of the demographically similar control group of students who sought vouchers but did not receive them.

The FTC economists, writing on their own and not on behalf of the agency, conclude "there is substantial evidence that school choice benefits the students who receive vouchers" and "no evidence that school choice harms the students who remain in public schools."

For more information…

WWW The paper by Jerry Ellig and Kenneth Kelly, "Competition and Quality in Deregulated Industries: Lessons for the Education Debate," is published in the Spring 2002 issue of *Texas Review of Law & Politics*. The paper also is available online at **www.rppi.org/education/education31.pdf**.

Even the research teams most critical of vouchers found "at worst, no impact on the public schools."

"The central premise of the critics of school choice—that it will 'destroy' the public schools—is supported by no data whatsoever," Ellig and Kelly conclude. In fact, the record suggests choice benefits students remaining in the regular public schools, because the competition forces their schools to improve.

Boosting School Productivity

The economists also found vouchers increase schools' productivity, which they defined as "educational outcome per dollar spent."

In 1999-2000, Ohio spent just $1,832 for each student in Cleveland's voucher program, as opposed to $4,910 per student in the city's traditional public schools. Wisconsin spent $5,106 for each Milwaukee voucher student, as opposed to $6,011 per student in the traditional public schools. Because the conventional public schools receive additional subsidies from local coffers and the federal government, the actual spending disparity is far higher.

"The FTC economists, writing on their own and not on behalf of the agency, conclude 'there is substantial evidence that school choice benefits the students who receive vouchers' and 'no evidence that school choice harms the students who remain in public schools.'"

"Given that voucher schools have achieved at least the same, if not significantly better, results with substantially less money," conclude Ellig and Kelly, "the inference arises that, if voucher schools were given the same per-pupil funding as public schools, student achievement might increase by an even greater degree."

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His e-mail address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

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School Vouchers Debated in New York

More than one hundred people gathered at Nassau Community College in Garden City, New York on April 4 to hear a debate on school vouchers organized by the director of the College's Center for Catholic Studies, Professor Joseph A. Varacalli, with the help of Barbara Bernstein, president of the Nassau Chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

The resolution being debated was: "Parents should be able to use public taxes to pay for the education of their children in private schools, whether secular or religious." Arguing for the affirmative were Frank Russo Jr., state director of the American Family Association and a board member of Citizens for Educational Freedom; and George A. Clowes, managing editor of *School Reform News*.

Opposed to the resolution were Rabbi Stephen W. Goodman, a board member of the Nassau Chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union; and Professor Philip Y. Nicholson, former president of the Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers and a faculty member in the college's history department.

The scheduled two-hour debate was extended beyond that time to permit extensive questions from the audience. Excerpts of the arguments used by each side are provided below.

Frank J. Russo Jr.

The essence of our position, based on principles of fairness and freedom, is that it is the parent, not the government, who should decide which school is best for his or her child. So long as a school performs the basic educational functions required by the state, the issue being debated asks who should pick the school.

Our opponents say parents should be forced to pick the government school, and if they refuse, they give up their fair share of the educational tax dollar. We say it is the parent who should make this decision, not the government, and this opportunity to choose must include poor and middle-income parents, not merely the wealthy.

The educational benefits from school choice are especially clear for poor and minority students stuck for years in failing inner-city public schools. While most of the opposition to choice comes from powerful teacher unions who see a threat to their monopoly, this is understandable, as they are simply looking after their own self-interest. The focus needs to be shifted from protecting the existing monopoly to a focus upon children, especially those in failing schools.

John Norquist, the Democrat mayor of Milwaukee, was initially opposed to vouchers. But while in the State Senate, he was persuaded by Polly Williams to do a complete turnabout and support school choice. According to Norquist, Milwaukee parents, children, and the entire city have clearly benefited from the school choice program.

Other opposition comes from those hostile to religious schools, who want to preserve the current government-run monopoly that basically imposes the religion of secular humanism on all students. With school choice, parents win by retaining the power to guide their child's moral and academic education; children win by getting a better education as result of competition; and taxpayers win by saving billions of dollars, since vouchers are set below the cost of a public school education.

George A. Clowes

My motivation for supporting vouchers is two-fold. First, we have to improve the quality of K-12 education or our republic cannot survive. As Thomas Jefferson said, "If you want a nation that is both ignorant and free, that is something that never was and never will be."

Secondly, we must treat all parents with equal respect. The current K-12 system treats parents disrespectfully. Parents are treated as if they are incompetent to make decisions about the education of their children.

It's only in public schools that parents are treated as incompetent.

Parents who are veterans are treated as competent to make decisions on spending federal education vouchers at public, private, or religious colleges, using almost $3 billion a year in GI Bill funds.

Parents with preschoolers are treated as competent to make decisions on spending federal day-care vouchers at public, private, or religious preschool facilities, using $4.8 billion a year in Child Care and Development Block Grant funds.

Parents who are college students are treated as competent to make decisions about spending federal education vouchers at public, private, or religious colleges, using more than $9 billion a year in Pell Grant funds.

It's time to treat parents of K-12 students as competent to make decisions on how to spend the tax dollars designated for the education of their children.

It's time to treat parents—particularly low-income parents—with the respect they deserve. Vouchers do that.

Rabbi Stephen W. Goodman

Let me speak as a religious leader. Is this what the religious community wants—to have the government sticking its nose into our religious schools, telling us what we can teach, when, where, and how? Isn't this one of the evils that Jefferson and Madison sought to avoid by establishing a wall of separation between church and state? Religion has thrived in this country as in no other, because it has been independent of government. Do we want to sell our souls to the government for a few dollars?

"According to Norquist, Milwaukee parents, children, and the entire city have clearly benefited from the school choice program."

As a religious leader, I worry when I hear the religious community saying, "We don't care enough about our own religious schools to pay for them. Let's get somebody else to pay for them. Let's make people who don't share our beliefs pay for our beliefs." That's undemocratic, unfair, and a deep violation of the founding principles of this nation.

And I worry about the moral independence of the religious community. Religion, like anything else, is not inclined to bite the hand that feeds it. If religious schools receive significant government funds, religious leaders will be less inclined to criticize the government. But that is one of the fundamental duties of the religious community. As Martin Luther King said, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and critic of the state, and never its tool."

School vouchers threaten to make us tools of the state. We see that here tonight. Under religious auspices, we are debating whether to give public money to religious institutions. For religious institutions, that is not a moral issue; it's a matter of pure self-interest. The moral question for religious institutions is this: Is it moral for us to take money away from public schools that are in trouble? The question we ought to be debating as a religious community is, why aren't we doing more to encourage government to raise and spend enough money on the public schools to ensure that poor children receive just as good an education as rich children?

Philip Y. Nicholson

Either religious freedom will be curbed by the state in religious schools if they receive public money, or there will be a danger to civil liberties from a public sanction and subsidy of religious authority. Remember, schooling is required by law of all children. Religious education, wherever it is done, is always a threat to someone's civil rights if those rights are inconsistent with the religious beliefs or practices. Look at how so many religions have regarded women, free speech, the rights of teachers or students to dissent. There will be serious erosion of the First Amendment if vouchers are permitted, unless the religious schools are forced to change.

In the South today in more than a dozen states private religious schools, mainly Baptist, have sprung up everywhere for millions of white parents who quite deliberately desire to evade racial desegregation. Those schools carefully take in a few selected non-whites, just enough to avoid the charge of racial exclusion, but those schools were clearly designed to avoid the court-ordered desegregation rulings for public schools of the recent past. Unless vouchers take away control over the admission and expulsion practices of private schools, racism and other civil rights violations will be subsidized by taxpayers.

I know that we all like to think that our own faith is a tolerant one, but any religious body that gains or wields political power is dangerous to outsiders to that faith and threatens greater abuse to its own followers because of its increased authority over them that vouchers could provide. Government-subsidized education can promote ethnic and religious intolerance.

RESOLVED: *Parents should be able to use public taxes to pay for the education of their children in private schools, whether secular or religious.*

AFFIRMATIVE		NEGATIVE	
"The essence of our position, based on principles of fairness and freedom, is that it is the parent, not the government, who should decide which school is best for his or her child." Frank J. Russo Jr.	"It's time to treat parents—particularly low-income parents—with the respect they deserve. Vouchers do that." George A. Clowes	"The moral question for religious institutions is this: Is it moral for us to take money away from public schools that are in trouble?" Rabbi Stephen W. Goodman	"Government-subsidized education can promote ethnic and religious intolerance." Philip Y. Nicholson

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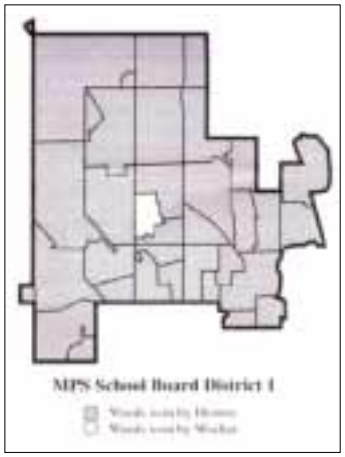

MILWAUKEE continued from page 1

over Annie Wacker, who garnered 42 percent. Wacker opposed school choice and was endorsed by the national and local affiliates of the teacher unions, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association.

Horton's election puts the reform members of the school board back in the majority. They gained ascendance in the school board elections of 1999, defeating a slate of candidates supported by the teacher unions and other opponents of school choice. However, their majority was reduced in the April 2001 election and the board became deadlocked on reform strategy when a swing board member, Donald Werra, resigned last September. As a result, the reform initiatives pursued by Superintendent Spence Korte had lost steam.

"I'm disappointed that [Senate Democrats] continue to attack the children of Milwaukee. We had to rescue them from the Democrats' attacks in the last budget, and I guess we'll have to do it again."

WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY SPEAKER, SCOTT JENSEN R-BROOKFIELD

"[Horton's election is] a decisive victory for decentralization, for parents and teachers having a strong input in MPS schools, and for fiscal responsibility," at-large board member John Gardner told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Gardner is a strong supporter of school choice as a means of improving MPS.

"The children are the winners here," said Horton, noting she prevailed in spite of what she called "nasty rumors, smear tactics, and dirty politics."

Getting the Message?

Although it was Horton's support for school choice that Wacker and her endorsers most opposed, the publicity campaign against Horton did not attack her for supporting choice, as the 1999 campaign against John Gardner had done. Political observers consider that evidence of a growing awareness on the part of school choice opponents that a strategy of running against choice is no longer likely to win over voters.

Apparently unaware of the new dynamic, three of four Democratic Milwaukee-area state senators joined the Democratic majority in voting on April 5 for a state budget that included a dramatic cut-back in funding for the 10,882-student school choice program.

Instead of funding vouchers for Milwaukee's poor children at $5,780 per student next year, Democrats approved $2,000 for K-8 students in 2002-03 and $1,000 in 2003-04. Vouchers for students in grades 9-12 were cut to $3,000 in 2002-03 and $1,500 in 2003-04.

"I've never agreed with having public money going into private schools," declared Senator Russ Decker (D-Wausau), who proposed the plan to cut the school choice program.

The three Milwaukee senators who voted for the budget with the voucher program cuts were Gwendolynne Moore, Richard Grobschmidt, and Brian Burke. In later comments, however, Moore and Grobschmidt voiced their opposition to the cuts in the school choice program.

Milwaukee Senator Gary George, a candidate for governor, made his opposition to the funding cuts clear by breaking with his colleagues and not voting for the budget, which he called "obviously punitive." Decker was "especially insensitive to the needs of minority children," George told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

"Beyond Rallies"

A week after the Senate vote, at a rally organized by former Milwaukee Schools Superintendent Howard Fuller, hundreds of school choice supporters gathered to condemn the slashing of voucher program funds. Labeling the cuts "uncalled for and unacceptable," Fuller suggested to the crowd of parents that the movement needed to move "beyond rallies."

"We're going to have to start voting for people who support us and voting out those who don't," he told the choice supporters, according to a *Journal Sentinel* account of the meeting.

For more information…

WWW For a discussion of last year's effort to cut funding for the Milwaukee voucher plan, see "WI Democrats Vote to Slash Voucher Funding," *School Reform News*, August, 2001.

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The Friedman Report

MR. HARPER'S MURALS

BY LAURA J. SWARTLEY

"I'm a proponent of outstanding education," says Russell Harper. He prefers to be known as an educator rather than an education reformer or a school choice advocate. But when speaking with Harper, it is clear he is most definitely reform-minded.

"Competition makes us all better," he said. "Public schools brought me to where I am, and I have nothing negative to say about them, but we have to get into the mindset of raising the bar."

Harper, a veteran educator and former public school principal, is the principal of Forsythe Charter Academy in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Under his charge: 600 kindergarten through seventh-grade students, with eighth grade to be added next year.

Forsythe is administered by National Heritage Academies, which has a threefold focus:

- First, academic excellence is placed front and center, with a national curriculum—E.D. Hirsch's Core Knowledge—that emphasizes grade-level aptitude and exceeding standards rather than just meeting them;
- Second, parental involvement is key;
- Third, moral development is integrated into every aspect of students' lives at school.

This moral development is based on ancient Greece's cardinal virtues: justice, prudence, tolerance, and fortitude. Not being based on a specific religion, it is all-inclusive and, as Harper puts it, "simply good old common sense."

There is a "virtue of the month," he explained, with a focus on a different aspect of that virtue each day. But rather than having the P.A. system announce, "Okay, children, remember today to be tolerant," the children lead the focus in the morning assembly, speaking in front of a large group.

The academic rigor of Forsythe has paid off. Students who came to Forsythe from various public, private, and homeschooling backgrounds score 1.4 years above national levels.

"The curriculum allows us to teach at higher levels, so the children learn at higher levels and are competitive nationally," said Harper. "I am against simply having state standards."

Harper's pride and joy lies in many aspects of his work, but he is especially proud of his school's many colorful educational murals. "Every part of the school has a mural, representing what goes on in that part," he said. "And every part of these murals was done by parents. Our parental involvement is spectacular."

In the center hallway, 100 feet of wall space is adorned with the largest mural in the school, depicting the comprehensive curriculum of Core Knowledge. It begins with a rainforest, moving onto pictures that represent history, geography, government, literature, art, science, and physical education.

Harper's favorite mural adorns the middle school hallway. It's called "Discover the Hero in You," and it depicts various heroes and heroines of world history. The curriculum of the middle school focuses on why they became heroes, and what they contributed.

"Middle schoolers are right at that age where they're making life decisions for the first time. They're looking for role models," said Harper, and the curriculum provides them.

Harper finds his largest challenge in meeting the expectations of the artists of these murals. "We are accountable to parents directly, because they chose to come to Forsythe," he said. "They naturally want the school to be perfect. We're not, of course, but we respond to their every piece of criticism. We take that challenge."

School Choice Roundup

ARIZONA

Tax Credit Program Debated

A March report from the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University contends Arizona's educational tax credit program has done little to broaden opportunities for the state's poor families.

The four-year-old Arizona program offers up to $625 in dollar-for-dollar state credits to individual taxpayers for their donations to nonprofit organizations that give private school scholarships to K-12 students. Another tax credit is permitted for donations to offset the cost of extracurricular activities at public schools, such as sports or field trips.

The report's authors, Alex Molnar and Glen Wilson, say the average tuition grant of $855.81 in 2000 is only a quarter of the average tuition charged at private elementary schools and not large enough to allow significant numbers of poor children to attend private schools. Fewer than 3,900 students—about one in four recipients—have switched from public to private schools under the program, only 2.1 percent of the state's poor children. The tax credit is expensive and inefficient, they argue, and it should be abolished.

Critics have lumped together two distinctly different credits, responds Darcy Olsen, executive director of the Goldwater Institute. She grants that the tax credit for public schools is of "questionable value" but argues the scholarship tax credit is a different matter entirely. She notes that 19,000 students have received scholarships since 1998, most on the basis of need. Many families struggle financially to send their children to private schools, she observes, and they "should not be punished by making them ineligible for needs-based scholarships."

As for the charge that the tax credits are "expensive," Olsen faults the critics for not taking into account the average $4,000 per student the state saves when a child transfers to a private school, which makes the tax credit revenue-neutral. She argues for expanding the credit to businesses to create many more scholarships.

Arizona Republic
April 15, 2002

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Patrick Now Leads Black Alliance

In March, Lawrence C. Patrick III, 26, was named president and CEO of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), which recently moved its headquarters from Milwaukee, Wisconsin to the nation's capital.

BAEO is a national nonprofit organization with a mission to actively support parental choice in empowering families and increasing educational options for black children. Formed in August 2000, BAEO has chapters under development in 29 cities in 22 states.

Patrick helped co-found the Alliance and served as secretary of its Board of Directors and chair of its Communications Committee. Previously, he was the leader and co-founder of Megaschool, a high-tech start-up company focused on helping inner-city charter schools better utilize technology. A 1993 Knight Ridder Scholar from Detroit, Patrick has worked at the *Detroit Free Press*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Tallahassee Democrat*, and Knight Ridder New Media in

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THE FRIEDMAN REPORT *School Choice Roundup*

Silicon Valley, where he created and managed e-commerce sites for the nation's second-largest newspaper company.

"Lawrence's commitment to parental choice and increased educational options for black children, coupled with his years of experience with this organization, make him an excellent choice," said BAEO Board Chairman Dr. Howard Fuller. "He brings a high level of professionalism and skills that will benefit our organization and the movement."

FLORIDA

Vouchers from Tax Credits Prove Popular

Three voucher programs have been started in Florida since Governor Jeb Bush took office, and the latest—involving corporate tax credits to fund $3,500 vouchers for low-income children in public schools—is picking up speed much faster than the first two did.

Although the program started only in January, more than 1,000 students already have received vouchers to enroll in private schools across the state, with almost all taking their state-authorized tuition checks to religious schools.

The law permits corporations to take tax credits up to a total of $50 million, which would fund vouchers for almost 14,300 children statewide. By Fall 2002, 11 new private schools in some of the poorest neighborhoods in Central Florida's Orange County will offer space for another 1,300 voucher students. Eight of the 11 schools will teach religion in the classes. For example, Vision Academy will integrate faith and academics, helped by retired Orange County teacher and administrator Mildred Eason.

"As we are Christian teachers and being a private-school setting, we don't have to adhere to the strict guidelines that are handed down by public-school administrators," Eason told the *Orlando Sentinel*.

Bush's first voucher program, which offers children in chronically low-achieving schools Opportunity Scholarships to use at private or better public schools, is utilized by only about 50 students in Escambia County. His second voucher program, which offers special-education students a McKay Scholarship to use at a private school, is utilized by nearly 4,000 students.

Orlando Sentinel
April 3, 2002

Schools Mull Whether to Accept Vouchers

With Florida's Department of Education making the public school grading scale more stringent, five schools in Duval County could receive this June their second F grade in four years. That would make as many as 2,400 students in those schools eligible to use Opportunity Scholarships to transfer to a better public school or an independent school.

But a number of private schools, including three of Northeast Florida's largest private schools, aren't jumping at the chance to take the publicly funded vouchers, worth an average of $3,500.

That's because participation in the Opportunity Scholarships program bars schools from making students pray or profess a certain ideological belief, while at the same time requiring the schools to accept any student who applies and to accept the voucher as full payment of tuition.

At The Bolles School, for example, tuition ranges from $4,700 to $8,050 a year, and student applicants are screened to make sure they can handle the school's rigorous curriculum. At other schools, the restrictions are seen as too intrusive.

"There have been just too many requirements that would infringe on the way we teach things," Clay Lindstam, an administrator at Trinity Christian Academy, told the *Jacksonville Times-Union*. But if the Opportunity Scholarships were more like the state's McKay Scholarships, Trinity officials said they would be more interested in participating.

The McKay Scholarship program allows parents of students with disabilities to choose a private school for their children, with participating schools allowed to keep their faith-based curriculum and also given greater flexibility in turning applicants down.

"If it was a no-strings-attached program where students could integrate into our program without any adjustment of how we teach, what we teach, then it would not be difficult," said Lindstam.

Jacksonville Times-Union
March 26, 2002

ILLINOIS

Tax Credit Bill Falls Short

In early April, votes in the Illinois House fell short for a bill that would have created up to $50 million a year for scholarships to allow children in limited-income families to attend independent schools. The funds would have come from scholarship organizations through donations from Illinois businesses, which would have received a tax credit of 90 percent for a two-year commitment of up to $100,000 a year.

The bill, HB4077, was placed on postponed consideration, which sponsor State Representative Joseph Lyons (D-Chicago) characterized as "deep coma."

"The issue should be kept alive for something where the purpose is noble, the cause is worthwhile, and the beneficiaries of this thing are most deserving," the legislator told the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Lyons admitted the timing wasn't good for a bill that reduces state revenue through tax credits, since the state is currently strapped for cash. On the other hand, Doug Delaney, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Illinois, pointed out that 16 schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago are closing and could have benefitted from Lyons' legislation.

Chicago Sun-Times
April 10, 2002

District Seeks to Curtail School Choice Options

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act signed into law earlier this year, school districts will be required this Fall to provide busing for students who want to get out of chronically failing schools and into better ones. In Chicago, that means students in 309 of the system's 596 schools could seek busing to other schools—or be offered private tutoring if they stay. But Chicago Public Schools officials want state legislators to restrict the choices open to students.

One option considered by officials is to split the city into zones and allow students to transfer into schools only within their zone, which would reduce busing costs. Another option would be to limit transfers into the system's 134 non-failing schools by barring transfers to "crowded" schools, where "crowded" is defined as filled to more than 80 percent of capacity. Transfers also would be limited into the city's 32 magnet schools and 23 schools with academic admission requirements.

Officials argue that, without some restrictions, the new federal law could lead to overcrowded classrooms, students in mobile trailers, resegregation of the magnet schools, and undermining the few schools that do succeed.

Chicago Tribune
March 31, 2002

PENNSYLVANIA

Privatization, Reorganization Ordered for 70 Schools

A divided Philadelphia School Reform Commission voted on April 17 to privatize 42 of the city's failing public schools and to substantially reorganize another 28, some of which will become independent charter schools.

Control of the 42 privatized schools—one in six of the city's public schools—will be transferred to seven school management organizations, including Edison Schools, Inc., the nation's largest for-profit operator of public schools.

The School Reform Commission consists of three members appointed by Pennsylvania Governor Mark Schweiker and two appointed by Philadelphia Mayor John Street, who had appointed the city school board that was relieved of its authority by the state last December. Less than half of the system's nearly 200,000 students can meet minimum proficiency standards on state reading and math tests. Schweiker's three appointees voted for the plan, while Street's two appointees voted against it.

Although still the largest privatization effort ever launched in the United States, the plan fell far short of Schweiker's original proposal, which envisioned Edison taking over the system's central administration as well as many more schools. However, the governor retreated when opposition arose from parents, students, the teacher union, and labor groups. Even on April 17, student protests forced the Commission to postpone and relocate its meeting.

Twenty schools were assigned to Edison, with the others assigned to Chancellor Beacon Academies, Inc. (5), Temple University (5), Foundations, Inc. (4), Victory Schools, Inc. (3), the University of Pennsylvania (3), and Universal Companies (2).

New York Times
April 18, 2002

VERMONT

House Passes School Choice Bill

By a 72-67 margin, legislators in the Vermont House on April 17 approved a bill that would allow parents the option of choosing a public school for their children, with approximately $4,500 in state block grant funding following the student to the chosen school. Under current law, passed two years ago, choice is restricted to a limited number of students in grades 9-12.

The bill, H716, phases in the choice options over a period of five years, with limits on the amount of the block grant and the number of students that can leave a school during the first two years. When fully phased in, all students would have the option of choosing another public school, as long the chosen school had capacity to take them. If a school received more applicants than it had space to accept, students would be assigned by lottery.

Lack of House support doomed two expanded choice provisions in the original bill. One would have permitted the block grant funds to follow the child to non-sectarian independent schools, and another would have established a tax credit to encourage taxpayer support of nonprofit organizations that give financial assistance to homeschooled students and students attending independent and parochial schools.

The approved bill now goes to the Senate, where some leaders have voiced opposition. Governor Howard Dean also is opposed to the measure.

Rutland Herald
April 16-17, 2002
Ethan Allen Institute

About the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization established in 1996 by Milton and Rose Friedman. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents to have a truly free choice of the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation works to build upon this vision, clarify its meaning to the general public, and amplify the national call for true education reform through school choice. Contact us at *www.friedmanfoundation.org* for more information.

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Would Higher Teacher Salaries Improve Teacher Quality?

Weighing across-the-board increases vs. pay-for-performance

BY HANNA SKANDERA AND RICHARD SOUSA

"Teaching is an emotionally, physically, and intellectually challenging career that today garners too little respect and low pay relative to comparable professionals."

BOB CHASE, PRESIDENT
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Teacher union officials, and those steeped in the tradition of schools of education, assert that blanket increases in teacher salaries are one way to achieve an improved education system. They contend higher teacher salaries across-the-board would compensate for the increased responsibilities shouldered by teachers; bestow the proper respect on the teaching profession; and attract well-prepared candidates to the field. They maintain teacher salaries have not been competitive within the job market and, therefore, the profession has not attracted the "best and brightest."

Others have challenged that view, questioning the wisdom of providing a blanket increase in compensation without a way to determine returns. If competitive teacher salaries are important, they argue, then an accountable and competitive environment should be part of the package: Market principles must be applied. Concerned about attracting better-qualified teachers and justifying salary increases in the face of falling test scores, some proposals have gone beyond across-the-board pay increases.

Focus on Outputs, Not Inputs

"Teacher compensation systems should be redirected from an input-driven system to an outcome-based system," according to a Texas Public Policy Foundation study authored by John C. Bowman, now president of Children First Tennessee. Bowman and others recommend teacher compensation systems be modified in the following ways:

- Superior teachers should earn more than average teachers.
- Poorly performing teachers should be expeditiously removed from the school system.
- Across-the-board pay hikes should be resisted and/or discontinued.
- Teachers performing more difficult tasks should receive higher pay.

If the primary goal is to increase the supply of teachers—a serious concern in some districts—blanket increases in teacher salaries might be one solution. Bowman concludes, however, that when salaries go up schools run the risk of paying more for the teachers they already have, or simply increasing the supply of teachers without increasing their quality.

"[A]ttempts to recruit better teachers by using across-the-board raises for all teachers, irrespective of merit, makes no discernible impact on new teacher recruitment," Bowman wrote in his report on teacher compensation.

The Upjohn Institute came to a similar conclusion after conducting several years of detailed empirical analyses of teachers in both the public and the private sector. The "dramatic increases in teacher salaries over the past twenty years have done nothing to improve the quality of American public school teachers," the institute reported.

Linking Pay to Performance

Unlike the general labor force, where output is a key salary determinant, the field of education rewards experience and advanced degrees. What if teacher pay scales were linked to performance criteria and improved productivity, rather than to the level of pre-service training?

Dr. Myron Lieberman, chairman of the Education Policy Institute, believes that if this were done, more of the best and the brightest might be attracted to teaching, thus enhancing teacher quality and presumably improving student achievement.

"When salaries go up, schools simply pay more for the teachers they already have, rather than increase the quality of new hires ..." Lieberman says. "Unless teacher salaries are raised for outstanding teachers, or teachers whose talent is paid more in the private sector, it will be impossible to recruit the kind of teachers who can elevate the entire profession."

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Not Bad For 185 Days of Work

Over the past decade, teacher salary growth outpaced growth in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), with salaries increasing 33 percent compared to a 30 percent increase in the CPI. In addition, the 1999-2000 public school teacher's average salary of $41,820 was earned over a period of 185 days, in contrast to the 235 days worked by most other employees.

The average teacher contract requires 7.3 hours of work a day, and teachers reported working an average of 2.5 additional hours a day, for a total of 9.8 hours of work a day. Although many teachers work beyond the traditional school day, other professionals do also; thus, it is difficult to make direct comparisons based on daily or weekly hour totals.

Moreover, previously unpublished data from the National Center for Education Statistics reveal many teachers earn income in addition to their compensation as full-time teachers. In the 1993-94 school year, for example, more than 50 percent of teachers earned supplemental income.

Incorporating these factors into the analysis indicates teacher salaries per day of work are far greater than those of most U.S. workers.

Table 1: Teacher's Salary Compared to the U.S. Worker's Average Salary and Government Worker's Average Salary

Year	Teacher's Average Salary (2000 Dollars)	U.S. Worker's Average Salary (2000 Dollars)	Government Worker's Average Salary (2000 Dollars)
1990	$40,765	$34,015	$36,038
1991	$41,588	$34,255	$36,950
1992	$41,602	$35,176	$37,586
1993	$41,774	$35,228	$37,605
1994	$41,569	$34,893	$38,265
1995	$41,649	$35,006	$38,436
1996	$41,211	$35,067	$38,370
1997	$41,388	$35,924	$38,815
1998	$41,760	$37,170	$39,497
1999	$41,913	$37,793	$39,901
2000	$41,820	*$38,074	*$39,702

*Estimate

Source: F. Howard Nelson, Rachel Drown, Jewell C. Gould, the Research & Information Services Department American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, Survey & Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2000 (Washington, D.C.: 2001). Available on-line at: http://www.aft

Keeping Up or Falling Behind?

Data from the American Federation of Teachers 2000 teacher salary survey show that, despite annual increases, the relative salaries of teachers have declined over time.

- Nationally, a teacher's average salary for 1999-2000 was $41,820, up 3.2 percent from the previous year. During the same interval, there was a 3.4 percent increase in the consumer price index and a 6.2 percent increase in the per-capita gross domestic product.
- In 1990, the teacher's average salary was 20 percent higher than that of a full-time worker in the United States. Over the last decade, however, relative to the average worker, teachers have lost ground. In the 1999-2000 school year, the teacher advantage had fallen to 10 percent.
- In 2000, teachers earned 5 percent more than other government employees, less than the 12 percent advantage teachers enjoyed in 1990.

Table 2: Teacher Salary Compared to Inflation and Gross Domestic Product per Capita

Year	Teacher's Average Salary	Consumer Price Index	Teacher's Average Salary(2000 Dollars)	Gross Domestic Product (per capita)	Teacher Salary to per Capita GDP Ratio
1990	$31,347	133.8	$40,765	$22,189	1.41
1991	$32,960	137.9	$41,588	$22,647	1.46
1992	$33,927	141.9	$41,602	$23,637	1.44
1993	$35,004	145.8	$41,774	$24,600	1.42
1994	$35,764	149.7	$41,569	$25,818	1.39
1995	$36,766	153.6	$41,649	$26,722	1.38
1996	$37,564	158.6	$41,211	$28,849	1.30
1997	$38,415	161.5	$41,388	$30,278	1.27
1998	$39,360	164.0	$41,760	$32,373	1.22
1999	$40,540	168.3	$41,913	$34,063	1.19
2000	$41,820	174.0	$41,820	$36,172	1.16

Source: F. Howard Nelson, Rachel Drown, Jewell C. Gould, the Research & Information Services Department American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, Survey & Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2000 (Washington, D.C.: 2001). Available on-line at: http://www.aft

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Vouchers Help the Learning Disabled

BY ROBERT HOLLAND

A recently released study of 22 nations has established that families of special-needs children are among the biggest beneficiaries of universal school choice. The study represents a powerful challenge to those who contend choice turns public schools into "special-education ghettos."

Such anti-choice figures as Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, have argued that government programs supporting parental choice of private schools will result in the best students leaving, with the public schools becoming dumping grounds for disabled, hyperactive, or delinquent students. That hypothetical outcome is often called "skimming."

But after an 18-month study of nations that aid parents in sending their children to private schools, Dr. Lewis M. Andrews has found special education children tend to thrive "to an extent not even imagined by American educators."

"Allowing parents to take the public money set aside for their child's education and spend it at any school of their choice is a social policy that clearly benefits most deaf, autistic, hyperactive, and other learning disabled children," concludes the study.

In fact, suggests Andrews, "the more American parents of learning-disabled children become knowledgeable about the benefits of school choice around the world, the more the advocates of the status quo may regret ever trying to exploit the issue of special education in the first place."

Andrews, who is executive director of the Yankee Institute for Public Policy in Hartford, Connecticut, conducted a detailed analysis of six countries: Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Each nation embraces school choice as national policy to some extent, although provisions vary for special education.

Denmark Offers Widespread Choice

The nation with the deepest and longest commitment to unfettered choice is Denmark. There, political support for private school choice dates back to 1899, and special-needs families are fully included. The Danish Education Ministry allows public subsidies to follow a disabled child to the school of the parents' choice. The state also makes extra grants for additional help, such as after-school tutoring.

As a consequence, more than 99 percent of Denmark's 80,000 learning-disabled children are educated side-by-side with so-called mainstream children, an ideal known as "inclusion." Only seventh-tenths of 1 percent are consigned to institutions. The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has lauded Denmark's free-choice approach as a model for the world.

Sweden, by contrast, adopted freedom of educational choice in 1992, but made a critical exception: Parents of special-education children were not given the same freedom. Writing in the April/May 2002 issue of *Policy Review*, Andrews attributed that omission to "Sweden's long history of pedagogic paternalism, which for decades had lowered testing standards, altered textbooks, and micromanaged both classroom and extracurricular activities—all in an effort to avoid making the learning disabled feel in any way inferior."

As a result, many special-needs children in Sweden continue to be ill-served by bureaucratic sorting mechanisms. For instance, more than one-half of deaf students still receive their education in separate institutions. Only half of Sweden's schools have put in place the individual plans for special-needs children that are supposedly required by the central ministry.

Holland, New Zealand Learn the Hard Way

Holland learned from the folly of having choice for "normal" students alongside no choice for those in special education.

Public funding of parental choice became national policy in the Netherlands in 1917; today, approximately two-thirds of elementary and secondary children attend private schools. However, the Dutch maintained separate school systems for educating children according to their particular learning disability, and began to notice a disturbing increase in the numbers of pupils labeled "disabled," a possible sign of bureaucratic empire-building.

In 1990, the Dutch adopted a "Going to School Together Policy," which gave parents of disabled children the right to choose either an ordinary or a special school. As a result, Andrews found, the Dutch education system is winning support from all political quarters, and especially from the advocates of increased inclusion. The system has whittled its 14 separate systems for the disabled to just four.

New Zealand also corrected initial flaws in school choice in order to allow the learning-disabled to participate fully.

In their book, *When Schools Compete: A Cautionary Tale*, school choice opponents Edward Fiske and Helen Ladd made much of New Zealand's freedom-of-choice law, enacted in the late 1980s, allowing the more popular public schools to reject students whose disabilities might drag down average scores or be expensive to remediate. However, notes Andrews, in 1999 and 2000 New Zealand adopted amendments that largely correct that problem. Supplemental funding follows the disabled child to the school of his or her parents' choice. As a result, school choice in the country "now enjoys nearly universal public support."

Early Success in U.S.

Andrews' study also notes Florida's early success in applying the lessons learned from the international experience with school choice. Under the two-year-old McKay Scholarship Program, parents of any special-needs child in Florida can receive a voucher worth anywhere from $6,000 to $20,000—depending on the severity of the child's disability—and can place the child in a private school of their choosing. Already, more than 300 private schools are serving more than 4,000 special-needs children through McKay Scholarships.

Andrews notes that much of the impetus for privatization of public education in Europe and elsewhere has come from activism on behalf of special-needs students. "In the end," says Andrews, "the parents of learning-disabled students have the same goal as all market-oriented school reformers: to make every educator accountable to the highest possible standards."

Robert Holland is a senior fellow at the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, Virginia. His e-mail address is rholl1176@yahoo.com.

40 Percent of What?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the federal government to cover a share of special-education costs. Although it is widely believed this means federal taxes should pay for 40 percent of the costs of educating a special-education student, the law actually defines Congress's contribution as *up to* 40 percent of the average per-pupil cost. As the editors of *Education Week* recently noted:

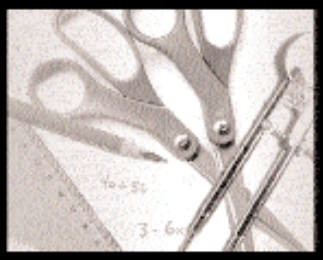
The law says that the most a state may receive in grants under this provision is the number that results from multiplying the eligible number of children receiving special education services in a state times "40 percent of the average per-pupil expenditure in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States."

The National School Boards Association estimates that some 6.15 million children are served under IDEA this year and that the average per-pupil expenditure is $7,320. Thus, the maximum contribution Congress could have provided was:

$7,320 x 40% =
$2,928 per special-education student
or
$2,928 x 6.15 million =
$18.0 billion in total

In fiscal year 2002, Congress authorized $7.5 billion in special-education state grants, or about 41 percent of the maximum Congress could have authorized under the law. A recent study by the National Research Council showed enrollment in special-education programs growing at an unprecedented pace. (See "Almost 1 in 8 Students Labeled 'Disabled,'" *School Reform News*, March 2002.)

Building Math Power



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Growing School Choice IN THE Community

AN INTERVIEW WITH
KEVIN TEASLEY
BY GEORGE A. CLOWES

What's a voucher proponent doing running a charter school?

Helping parents get a better education for their children, according to Kevin Teasley, president of the Indianapolis-based Greater Educational Opportunities Foundation and holder of the first charter in the nation awarded to a public policy advocacy organization.

That's the end of all choice-based school reform, he says, with charters, tax credits, and vouchers simply the means.

When the charter was awarded last December, Teasley explained the school would bring together multiple age groups and enhance individual student learning through the use of information technology. Stressing the need to move beyond what he called "the factory school of yesterday," he described "a new model for the 21st century."

After graduating from Indiana University with a journalism and political science degree, Teasley went to Washington, DC to do an internship with the National Journalism Center and the Reagan White House. He subsequently moved into public relations, first with The Heritage Foundation and then with the Reason Foundation in Los Angeles, where he served as public relations director. When California's first school voucher initiative, Proposition 174, took off in 1992, Teasley was named vice chairman and executive director of the sponsoring organization, ExCEL.

After a stint as head of the American Education Reform Foundation, Teasley established the GEO Foundation in Indianapolis in 1998. GEO embraces all quality educational options that enable parents to help their children learn and schools to succeed. The organization has been aggressive in its community outreach and educational efforts not only in Indiana but also in several other states. Teasley was recently interviewed by *School Reform News* Managing Editor George Clowes.

"The important point here is that we seek to empower urban leaders with the knowledge and the tools to make choice a reality for themselves. We do not want to impose choice on anyone. We want community ownership so that choice programs take root in the community and survive long after our involvement."

Clowes: *What is your perspective on the second California voucher initiative, Proposition 38?*

Teasley: I was not involved with that initiative. However, I did meet with Tim Draper early on, and I told him what he was up against and advised against doing an initiative campaign. By that time, most of the potential funders at the national level were against putting an initiative on the ballot again. But I believe it suffered from much the same problem the first one: lack of grassroots support.

Tim had little to no grassroots support or involvement at the beginning of his campaign and little materialized as the campaign progressed. When it was over, the 2000 campaign received a lower percentage of votes than the 1993 campaign, yet spent four times as much—in excess of $20 million—and had a lot more technical support going for it, such as the Internet, email, and other twenty-first century tools.

The 2000 campaign also did not take advantage of the Milwaukee success story, which by then was almost 10 years old. In 1993, we couldn't use it because the program was too young and very little research had been published. Today, there is a lot of information coming out of Milwaukee showing that choice works for children and for public and private schools.

Clowes: *What were the lessons learned from California's first voucher initiative?*

Teasley: We lost the Proposition 174 campaign 70-30. I worked on the campaign because I believe in school choice and I was tired of doing press releases on ideas and not being able to follow through with them. The 1993 campaign offered me the chance to change an idea into reality.

But after losing, I wanted to learn from our campaign's mistakes. The two biggest concerns

For more information…

WWW An account of one fact-finding trip to Milwaukee is found in "Milwaukee Choice Proves Attractive," *School Reform News*, July 2000, available online at **www.heartland.org/education/ jul00/milwaukee.htm**.

A "virtual" fact-finding tour of Milwaukee is available at the Web site of the Greater Educational Opportunities Foundation at **www.geofoundation.org**. The Foundation is located at 1800 North Meridian Street #506, Indianapolis, IN 46202, phone 317/283-4711.

Mikel Holt's book about the 30-year battle for school choice in Milwaukee, *Not Yet "Free at Last,"* is available from Amazon.com at **http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1558155104/theheartlandinst**.

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I had about the campaign were:

- First, donors to the campaign did not make contributions based on our having a business plan, rather most gave because they liked the idea of choice.
- Second, people from poor-performing schools were not involved with the campaign from day one.

To remedy this situation, I set out to talk to most of the donors and convince them of the need for a business plan for school choice. The issue deserves and demands it. To a great degree, this goal has been achieved. Donors now are working more closely with one another and asking tough questions they did not ask before. That should result in a stronger movement and more victories.

As for the lack of grassroots support, I established the Greater Educational Opportunities Foundation to tackle this problem as best I could. Most urban families don't know the various school choice options that many states are experimenting with, most don't know school choice proponents, but most do know many opponents. This makes it very hard to win campaigns for school choice.

The GEO Foundation set out to change this dynamic in a very unusual manner. Instead of printing books and white papers, we started taking urban leaders on fact-finding trips to Milwaukee to see school choice as a working reality. We focus on taking people who are not already in the school choice camp.

"Donors [to school choice efforts] now are working more closely with one another and asking tough questions they did not ask before. That should result in a stronger movement and more victories."

They go with all kinds of questions: Are public schools failing for lack of funding? Are schools discriminating against children? How is transportation handled? Are private schools being selective? Are vouchers simply helping the rich?

The trips help urban leaders discover the truth about school choice, which is that public schools are succeeding, children are not being discriminated against, families are finding ample transportation to support their choices, and vouchers are helping the poor since the law restricts their use to poverty-level families only. If the people are open-minded at all, they usually return from the trip as converts in support of choice.

Once we return, we ask our guests what kind of choice plan works best for them, discussing the various choice options and trying to help them understand all the complexities involved in the legislative battles to make choice a reality in their community.

The important point here is that we seek to empower urban leaders with the knowledge and the tools to make choice a reality for themselves. We do not want to impose choice on anyone. We want community ownership so that choice programs take root in the community and survive long after our involvement.

Clowes: *What is involved in a typical trip to Milwaukee?*

Teasley: The trip is the end result of lots of upfront work to find the right people to go in the first place. We need to find the community movers and shakers and convince them the trip is worthy of their time. We also need to know the invited guests are able to make a difference if they come back supportive of school choice.

In Milwaukee, we visit public, private, voucher, charter, and alternative schools. We visit with the mayor, who is a Democrat, with Milwaukee school board members, with parents and students, and with teachers and principals. We also visit with the teacher union. Providing all of these perspectives to our guests helps them develop an informed opinion. They see choice really does work and that it's supported by lots of people from all over the political map, not just conservatives.

The trips have gained us a great deal of respect and trust within the communities with which we work. When was the last time the teacher union sponsored a trip for leaders to see the reality of school choice in Milwaukee—and arranged for both sides to be presented? Never. We believe our position is so strong that it is hard for anyone to agree with the opposition once they see the reality of school choice.

Clowes: *What caused you to shift focus?*

Teasley: My focus was originally on vouchers. Today, I think that view is a bit narrow and limits our ability to build strong coalitions. What we really want to do is empower the powerless. Those with money already have choices. Those without money don't.

At GEO, we support all methods of choice. We support charters, vouchers, tax credits, and tax deductions as well as contract, partnership, magnet, private, parochial, and public schools. The real adjective we are interested in seeing in front of the word school is "quality." By being ecumenical in our approach, we stand a better chance of making allies and creating opportunities to gain more converts. Once someone agrees to some form of choice, it isn't too long before they understand the need for other choices, too.

Rightly or wrongly, voucher supporters are viewed as anti-public school. I know that is not true of most voucher supporters, but it is a common perception. I prefer to say we're in favor of choices, which includes choosing public schools in addition to private and parochial schools.

Unfortunately, our rhetoric does not always convey this notion. Often times, I hear school choice supporters use phrases such as "private school vouchers," "private school tax credits," and "tuition tax credits." These phrases convey to the public the idea that we want to get funding to private schools and take it away from public schools. That doesn't help us. We need to use language that includes public schools.

For example, school choice in Milwaukee means parents can choose public schools for their children, too. We need to clarify that the money follows the child and that vouchers can be used at public schools, too. Also, we shouldn't say that money flows from public schools because it is not the public schools' money in the first place. The money should follow the child to whatever school is most appropriate: public, private, parochial, charter, magnet, alternative, contract or otherwise.

Clowes: *Why start a charter school?*

Teasley: We are starting a charter school for many reasons.

First, during our grassroots efforts, we found many families crying out for more choices. We talk about the need for more choices, but we have the ability to create a quality choice ourselves. We are in the fortunate position of having a strong charter law and all the ingredients needed to open a strong school.

Second, we want to impact public schools statewide by showing what can be done, not talking about it.

Third, we want to build meaningful relationships with families and community leaders. Our school has already helped us reach more families in a more meaningful way than ever before. We also are in regular conversations with community and elected officials like never before. We are not a "one-note Charlie."

We have gained a lot of respect in the community as a result of putting our reputation on the line and starting a school. It is one thing to talk about choice and the need for change; it is quite another to actually start a choice school. It is a big risk on our part.

I encourage other school choice organizations to consider starting their own school. Most of these organizations already have the necessary infrastructure to succeed, beginning with a strong board, strong financial backing, and business savvy. In addition, most of these organizations know what works educationally. It can be done. Once you start your school, it will provide a base of operations from which you can work for years to come.

Clowes: *What recommendations do you have for organizing for school choice?*

Teasley: When organizing for school choice, I recommend starting from the grassroots and working your way up, not the other way around. We started from the top in California and we failed miserably. We need to listen to the people in the failing schools and—in particular—be open to all choice ideas.

For example, Steve Schuck, an ardent voucher supporter in Colorado, started a scholarship program recently. Instead of making it a "private school scholarship" program, he made it a "parents challenge" program, where parents could keep their children in public schools and use the scholarship funds to get books, computers, and tutors. Of course, he allows parents to use the scholarships at private schools as well, but that is the parents' decision.

As a result, Steve has received a great deal of public support for his program and he has changed the dynamic in Colorado in regards to school choice. People no longer look at Steve as a "voucher" guy, but rather a man who wants to help poor families educate their children. That is a big difference and it is helping us win converts in Colorado.

Milwaukee started at the grassroots. Most people look at 1990 as the first year of the Milwaukee school choice battle, but it started about 20 years before with battles over busing and integration, the creation of an all-black school district, and vouchers. It wasn't until 1990 that the grassroots proponents gained enough support to finally win. But when they won, it was a victory for grassroots supporters and they are there today to defend and implement the program to their liking.

Clowes: *What do you regard as the biggest obstacle to the progress of school choice?*

Teasley: In the battle for school choice, perception and patience are just about everything. If people think you are out to destroy public schools, they won't support you. If they don't think you are in it for the long haul, they won't support you, either.

"The GEO Foundation ... started taking urban leaders on fact-finding trips to Milwaukee to see school choice as a working reality. We focus on taking people who are not already in the school choice camp."

Perception is important to the school choice movement because you can't win if everyone thinks you are out to destroy public schools. We're not. We're out to empower parents with more choices—choices that include public schools.

Patience is important because the opposition is bigger, better funded, and better organized than we are ... and will do everything it can to discredit school choice proponents. Look across the street from every state capitol and you will see the teacher union building without exception. That is by design. They want to keep an eye on every move legislators make. They understand this is a 365 days-a-year job. We need to be just as vigilant.

I'm encouraging donors and other leaders to invest in supporting organizations that will help us in the long haul in communities where we want to have an impact.

It's important to invest in creating institutional foundations for school choice. Those institutions need to focus 100 percent on parent empowerment issues in regard to K-12 education so that efforts are not diluted in the pursuit of other agendas. This has been our practice at GEO Foundation in Indiana and Colorado where we have offices. We are laying the groundwork to have a long-term impact on K-12 parent empowerment issues.

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Education Industry

A sampling of education industry news from The Education Economy, *a weekly publication of the market research firm Eduventures.com, which conducts research on the pre-K-12, post-secondary, corporate training, and consumer markets worldwide. This copyrighted material is used by permission of Eduventures.com, Inc.*

Venture Capital Decline Hits Education Hard

Total U.S. venture capital investment declined for the seventh straight quarter during the first three months of 2002, down from $27.2 billion in the second quarter of 2000 to only $5 billion in the first quarter of this year. The education industry accounted for less than 1 percent of all private investment activity in the U.S.—a poor performance matched only by the third quarter of 2001, reports **Eduventures, Inc.** Executive Vice President Peter J. Stokes in *The Education Economy* on April 1.

"While firms such as Warburg Pincus, Goldman Sachs, Forstmann Little, and Putnam have dipped into the investment waters this winter," notes Stokes, "many private equity shops are avoiding the polar bear club altogether and keeping their money warm and dry."

Artificial Intelligence Tutors to be Offered Online

On March 27, **Holt, Rinehart and Winston** (HRW), a textbook publisher and provider of online learning tools for secondary education, announced a long-term agreement with **Quantum Simulations, Inc.**, a developer of artificial intelligence tutoring technologies. As part of its initiative to offer robust e-learning curricula along with textbooks, HRW will offer Quantum Intelligent Tutors over the Internet for middle school physical science and high school chemistry, physical science, and integrated science.

Assessment, Scoring Programs to Be Integrated

EdVision Corporation, a provider of curriculum and assessment software solutions, and **ETS Technologies, Inc.**, a subsidiary of **Educational Testing Service** that provides automated scoring of essays and short-answer questions, announced a partnership on April 9. The companies plan to integrate the e-rater automated essay scoring technology produced by ETS Technologies with EdVision's Performance Series program for standards-based assessment and reporting.

CNN Student News May Remain Sponsor-Free, Unprofitable

AOL Time Warner is backing off plans to sell paid sponsorships for a commercial-free, educational CNN news show used in 18,000 U.S. schools, according to a March 26 *Atlanta Constitution* report. Sponsorship revenue would have defrayed some of the costs of improving the half-hour program, but the proposal was criticized as an example of increased commercialism in classrooms. CNN Student News has been commercial-free and unprofitable since Ted Turner launched it 13 years ago.

Colleges Try Hybrid Classes: Real and Virtual

As colleges and universities have migrated courses to the Web over the past few years, many have reported high dropout rates for classes that are completely virtual, according to a recent issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. To combat this problem, a growing number of colleges are experimenting with "hybrid" or "blended" models of teaching that replace some in-person meetings with virtual sessions.

Online Instruction for Virtual Classrooms

Odyssey Learning Systems has entered into a strategic relationship with **TutorsEdge**, an innovative provider of live online instruction technology. TutorsEdge's online virtual classroom technology vClass will be integrated into Odyssey's Nautikos eLearner managed learning platform to provide virtual classroom capabilities.

Scholastic Acquires Innovative Publisher

Scholastic Corporation, a global children's publishing and media company, announced on April 8 that it has completed the previously announced acquisition of **Klutz**, an innovative publisher and creator of "books plus" products for children, from **Corus Entertainment, Inc.**, one of Canada's leading media and entertainment companies.

Xap Will Offer Online Tutorials for ACT and SAT

On March 27, **Xap Corporation**, a developer of online student services for the postsecondary market, announced the acquisition of **Number2.com**, a provider of Internet-based test preparation services. The acquisition will allow Xap to offer students easy-to-use tutorials for each subject area covered by the ACT and SAT.

The Education Economy *is read by leading education company executives, investors, academics, policy experts, and education leaders around the globe. To subscribe to* The Education Economy, *register online at www.eduventures.com. Eduventures, Inc. may be reached at 20 Park Plaza, Suite 833, Boston, MA 02116, 617/426-5622, fax 617/426-5431.*

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What Digital Divide?

For more information…

WWW The February 2002 report from the U.S. Department of Commerce, *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet*, is available on the Internet at **www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/dn/index.html**.

With two million new users being added each month, more than half of the nation now uses the Internet, and the much-decried "digital divide" is closing at a rapid rate, according to a new report from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

From 1998 to 2001, Internet use by individuals in the lowest-income households—those earning less than $15,000 a year—increased at a 25 percent annual growth rate compared to only 11 percent growth among individuals in the highest-income households, those earning $75,000 a year or more.

The February 2002 report, *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet*, also shows Internet use among African-Americans and Hispanics increased at annual rates of 33 and 30 percent respectively, with growth rates among whites increasing at a lower 20 percent rate. The growth of Internet usage among people living in rural households increased at an annual rate of 24 percent; the percentage of Internet users among people living in rural households (53 percent) is now almost the same as the national average (54 percent).

The highest growth rate among different types of households is for single mothers with children, at 29 percent. Computer usage among children and teens is higher than any other age group, and computers in schools substantially narrow the gap in computer usage rates for children from high- and low-income families.

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Satellite TV Merger Could Boost Distance Learning, Homeschooling

Bringing the digital future to rural communities

BY JOSEPH L. BAST

A pending merger between the nation's two largest digital satellite television service providers could be a major advance for distance learning and homeschooling. However, opponents are lobbying to prevent the merger, claiming it would lead to fewer choices for consumers and higher prices.

In October 2001, EchoStar Communications, which operates the DISH network, announced plans to merge with Hughes Electronics, which operates DIRECTV. The combined company would have 16.7 million subscribers, about 91 percent of the satellite television market, though only 17 percent of the pay-television market, which includes both satellite and cable delivery.

"EchoStar Communications currently offers several distance learning and homeschooling education networks on the DISH Network, serving over 6.4 million subscribers."

The merger would allow the companies to pool their licenses and bandwidth to provide local network channels, something currently possible in only 42 television markets. The combined company would be able to offer local channels in "all 210 television markets ... every television market in the country, including Alaska and Hawaii," offering more rigorous competition to cable and conventional broadcasting stations.

The merger could boost distance learning and homeschooling by expanding access to broadband data services. Fewer than 5 percent of small towns and rural communities now have access to broadband via digital subscriber lines (DSL) or cable operators. Broadband means faster, more reliable, "always on" access to the Internet.

In his statement announcing the merger plan, EchoStar Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Charles Ergen said the merger would result in "cost savings from the elimination of costly duplicate satellite bandwidth and infrastructure" and enable satellite television "to compete more effectively against the dominant U.S. cable and broadband providers."

The combined company, he said, would "increase significantly the number of markets served with local channels via satellite, provide additional channel offerings, increase high-definition TV (HDTV) offerings, accelerate the introduction of next-generation high-speed Internet services, and offer nationwide competitive prices."

Educational Programs

EchoStar Communications currently offers several distance learning and homeschooling education networks on the DISH Network, serving over 6.4 million subscribers. Those channels are presented commercial-free.

- StarNet, an initiative of the United Star Distance Learning Consortium (USDLC), Inc., is a nonprofit organization broadcasting 24 hours a day with a two-channel selection. First launched in 1985 to serve rural Texas school districts, it is now a leading distance learning network serving schools in more than 30 states using live, interactive satellite broadcasts with CD-ROM and Web-based integration.

  StarNet annually delivers more than 150 hours of innovative professional development, more than 20 student courses, and more than 120 hours of student enrichment programming.
- PBS YOU is a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week program service offering formal and informal education programming, including adult learning, foreign language instruction, how-to, and educational documentaries. Viewers can simply watch the programs for entertainment and self-enrichment; self-teach without a formal interface; or in some cases enroll and obtain college credit. Such enrollment can lead to college degrees from more than 1,000 colleges that offer PBS telecourses.

"Fewer than 5 percent of small towns and rural communities now have access to broadband via digital subscriber lines (DSL) or cable operators. Broadband means faster, more reliable, 'always on' access to the Internet."

- The Learning Studio is a pilot project of Educating Everyone, South Carolina Educational Television, and the United States Distance Learning Association to test the effectiveness and use of instructional resources delivered via satellite, with an emphasis on foreign language instruction.

  The Learning Studio concentrates on K-12 education, specifically foreign language instruction, English as a Second Language (ESL), Graduation Equivalency Degree (GED) curricula, and teacher training. It also serves as a platform for educational programmers to experiment and develop digital television and multi-media curriculum materials.

Competition and Pricing

Opponents of the merger of EchoStar and Hughes contend the new company would have too much market power against competitors and would be able to raise prices to captive customers.

Defenders of the merger counter that satellite broadcasting competes with a wide variety of means of obtaining video and other types of electronic data, including traditional television broadcasters, cable television, and even videocassette players, DVD players, and broadband services over the Internet. That competition, they say, will force the combined company to keep its prices competitive.

Malcolm Wallop, a former U.S. Senator from Wyoming, says he has seen the positive impact a strong satellite industry can have on cable and telephone companies that otherwise enjoy a "cozy monopoly" in many rural areas.

"The satellite industry has a strong track record of serving rural areas, not with promises but with programming," Wallop wrote in an essay published in the *Rocky Mountain News* in late January. "This is especially true in the West. Satellite providers deliver service in areas other companies literally won't go near."

The proposed merger, according to Wallop, "would be a competitive shot in the arm for the whole pay-TV market. ... The competition from satellite put the heat on cable providers to roll out new services for customers, including digital broadband services. That's how a competitive free market is supposed to work." He goes on to call the proposed merger "a winner for everyone" and, for many rural areas of the West, "the only affordable ticket to the digital future."

While some fear the combined company would use its dominance in the satellite arena to raise prices, EchoStar and DIRECTV have pledged to continue to offer uniform, nationwide pricing for television programming. This means rural customers would benefit from competitive pricing occurring in urban settings. The merger makes such a pricing system—which clearly benefits rural residents—easier to maintain.

Joseph L. Bast is president of The Heartland Institute, publisher of School Reform News. *He writes frequently on antitrust issues.*

For more information...

WWW For more information on the Echostar - DIRECTV merge, visit the Heartland Institute Web site at **www.heartland.org.**

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Title I's Recipe for Fraud

BY LISA SNELL

Individual schools receive Title I funding based on the percentage of students eligible for the federally subsidized free-lunch program. Though the program is designed to provide food to low-income students who might otherwise go hungry, its guidelines do not require schools to verify the parental income of students who enroll. Parents qualify by self-reporting their income on a form turned in to their local school.

However, federal free-lunch data are used as one of the main poverty indicators for school districts and act as a multiplier for many other local, state, and federal funding streams. Thus, any fraud in the free-lunch program is quickly multiplied through many other programs designed for students from low-income households.

That multiplier effect also provides school districts with an incentive to sign up students.

Ice Cream and Pizza

Many school districts offer free ice cream and other tokens to students who return their forms, even if they aren't eligible for the program. Schools have mailed multiple enrollment forms to parents and some have even taken to calling families at home to ask them to enroll.

For example, in October 1999 *The Baltimore Sun* reported the principal of Patterson High School took to the intercom and made the following announcement:

"Guess what is coming? Pizza Party! Everyone connected with the school, from parents to staff members, will eat pizza, get a free T-shirt, and listen to a disc jockey if poor students can get their parents to fill out an application for free and reduced-price school lunches."

In 1999, about 50 percent of Patterson High School's 2,200 students qualified for free meals. By using the pizza party strategy, school principal Laura D'Anna increased that to more than 70 percent of students in 2000.

While fraud from the federal free-lunch program may have small consequences for the program itself, the cost of fraud to other education programs, such as Title I, may be much greater. Districts that have tried more strictly to verify parental income have met with resistance.

When the Bergenfield school district in New Jersey required parents to submit more extensive income documentation after the number of students in the free-lunch program doubled in one year, the New Jersey state nutrition program forced the district to reinstate all students who were disqualified from the program. Bergenfield district business administrator Tom Egan argued there were inconsistencies in some of the applications, including applications from students whose parents had homes valued at $350,000.

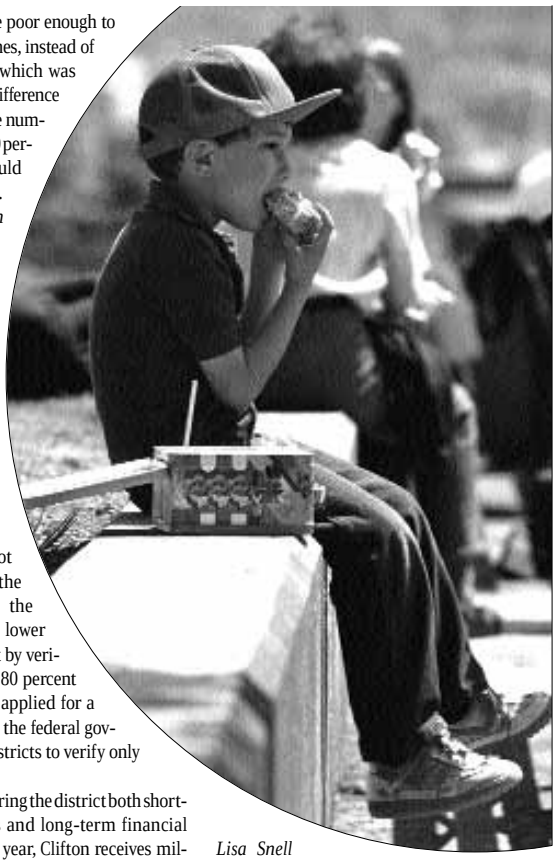
Blatant Fraud OK

In some cases, however, school boards openly over-report their school lunch data. In 1999, the Clifton school board in Bergen, New Jersey, voted 5-4 to report that exactly 20.16 percent of public school students were poor enough to qualify for free lunches, instead of the actual number, which was 19.19 percent. The difference was significant: If the number dropped below 20 percent the district would lose $4 million in aid.

As the *Bergen County* (New Jersey) *Record* reported in November 1999, board president Wayne Demikoff said while casting his vote for the higher number, "I cannot, in good conscience, vote for something that is going to devastate the budget."

The board did not necessarily break the law by reporting the higher number. The lower figure was arrived at by verifying the income of 80 percent of the families that applied for a free lunch. However, the federal government requires districts to verify only 3 percent.

The free lunches bring the district both short-term fiscal benefits and long-term financial consequences. Each year, Clifton receives millions of dollars in aid for needy students. At the same time, New Jersey districts that have more than 20 percent of their students on free lunches are supposed to begin providing full-day kindergarten and half-day preschool.



Lisa Snell is an education policy analyst with Reason *magazine in Los Angeles, California. Her email address is lsnell@reason.org. A version of this article was first published in* Reason *last summer.*

Inflated Lunch Figures Foil Reform

In the past, federal administrators from the National School Lunch Program have argued the program has little potential for abuse because "the worse that happens is a kid gets a free lunch." But that's not the case. Billions of dollars in federal funds are allocated on the basis of the lunch program's enrollment figures, which the U.S. Department of Education now says are in error, with one in five participants being ineligible because their family income is too high.

Last year, about 13 million children received free meals from the federal free or reduced-price lunch program, with another 2.6 million paying up to 40 cents for a reduced-price meal. But studies done by Mathematica Policy Research show the program's enrollment was 5 percent higher than it should have been in 1994, 23 percent higher in 1998, and 27 percent higher in 1999. Congress was recently informed about the soaring error rate by Eric M. Bost, undersecretary for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services.

Although a one-in-five payout error means more than $1 billion a year of the lunch program's $5.5 billion budget is being mis-spent on ineligible families, the error compounds to mis-allocate resources in many other programs.

The school lunch participation numbers are used to distribute $10.4 billion in Title I state grants, plus literacy and reading grants, and vocational/technical education funding. They also are used to determine a district's discount on E-rate technology upgrades. Students in the lunch program also may be granted waivers for other school fees and after-school care. And teachers in schools with high lunch program participation levels can get their college loans forgiven.

Reason magazine's Lisa Snell raises another concern with the lunch program's inflated enrollments: They have serious implications for school reform decisions, by making reforms directed at children in poverty appear to be much more costly than they would be in reality.

For example, Snell notes, when President George W. Bush and several policy groups last year proposed "voucherizing" Title I spending and allowing the Title I money to follow the individual child out of failing public schools into better-performing private or public schools, the financial implications of the proposal were daunting. If every Title I child received a voucher, it would have cost billions more than current Title I spending levels. As a result, says Snell, the voucher plan for Title I students was "dead on arrival."

"However, if up to 20 percent of the students who qualify for Title I based on their free and reduced-price lunch status are actually ineligible, this leaves a much lower number of students who need vouchers to exit low-performing schools," she points out.

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Principles for Reform

- Tax dollars for education should follow students to the schools their parents choose.
- Principals and teachers should be rewarded when their schools excel.
- Parents should be given enough funding to be able to choose among high-quality secular as well as religious schools.
- Entrepreneurs and businesses should be free to start or manage schools.
- Schools should not be allowed to participate if they teach the hatred or inferiority of any person or group.
- Parents who choose inexpensive schools should be allowed to deposit the savings into Education Savings Accounts, to be used to pay for other educational expenses or college tuition.
- Schools should be regulated only to the extent needed to ensure the safety of students.

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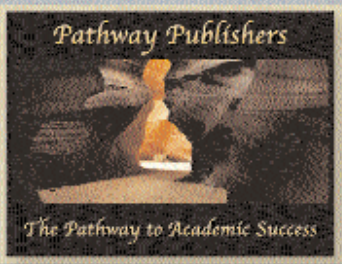

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